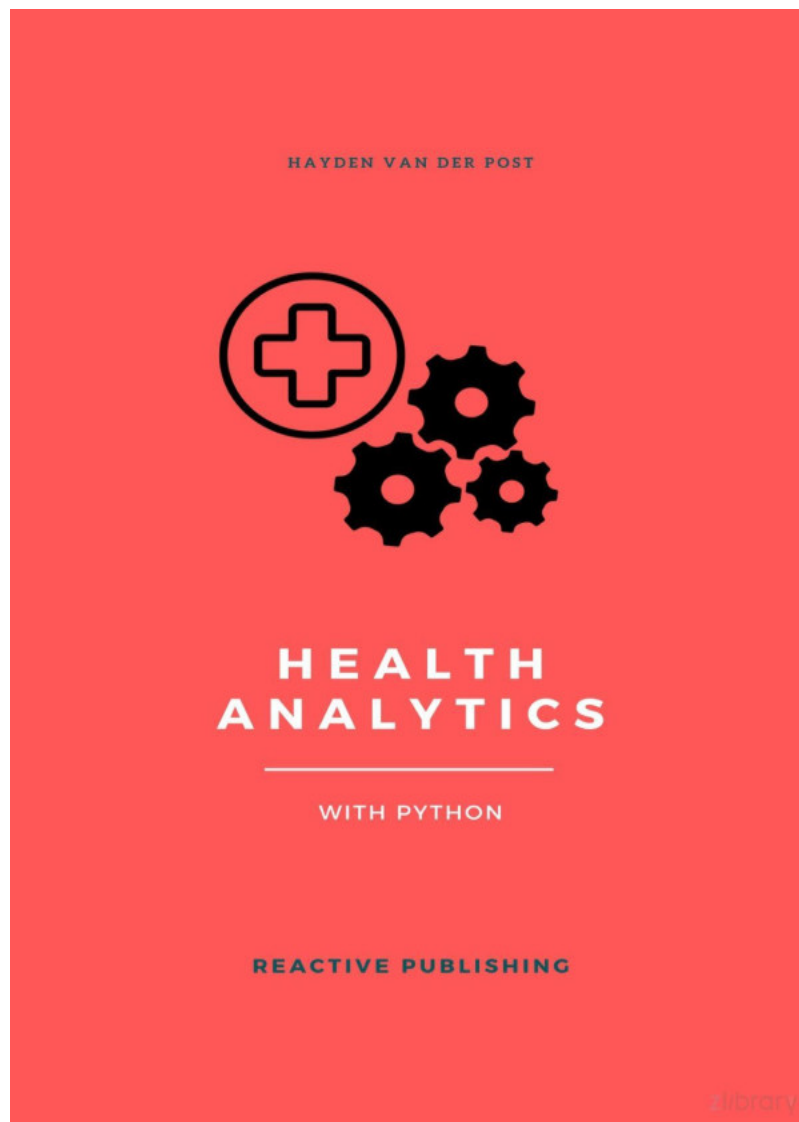


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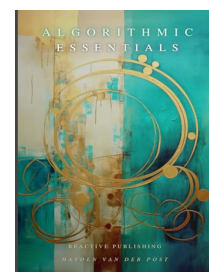
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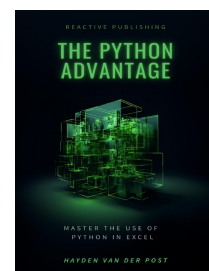
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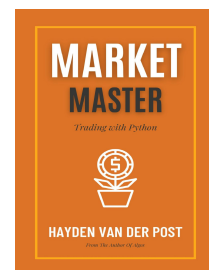
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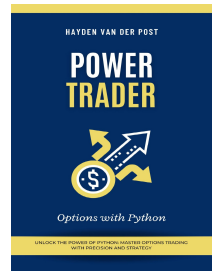
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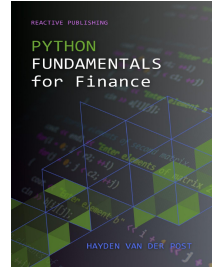
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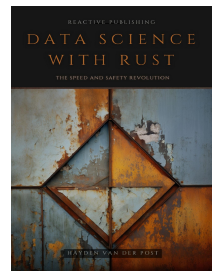
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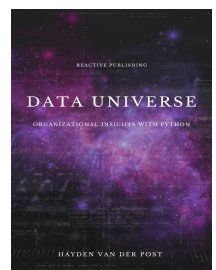
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO PYTHON IN HEALTHCARE

The journey of Python within health data science truly began in the late 2000s, when the explosion of data transformed the healthcare sector. The need for a language that could handle vast datasets, while being flexible and easy to learn, made Python the ideal candidate. Consequently, Python's adoption was not just an evolution—it was a revolution in how healthcare data was analysed and interpreted.

Around the turn of the decade, several pivotal libraries were introduced, bolstering Python's position as the lingua franca of data science. NumPy brought efficient array computation, while pandas facilitated data manipulation and analysis with dataframes—structures ideally suited to handling medical datasets. Matplotlib and later seaborn provided powerful visualization tools, essential for discerning patterns and correlations in clinical data.

As the adoption of electronic health records (EHRs) became commonplace, Python proved indispensable. Researchers and clinicians required tools to parse and scrutinize this new wealth of digital health information. Python's libraries like PyDicom for reading DICOM files, a standard for medical

imaging, and libraries for processing EHRs like FHIR, became integral to the healthcare data workflow.

The era of big data brought with it machine learning, and Python was once again ahead of the curve. Scikit-learn, TensorFlow, and Keras enabled even those with a nascent understanding of machine learning principles to build predictive models. Models that could foresee patient outcomes, optimise treatment pathways, and even identify potential epidemics became a reality, constructed from the foundation Python offered.

One cannot discuss Python's role in health data science without acknowledging its impact during global crises. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Python was instrumental in modeling the spread of the virus, analysing its genomic sequence, and managing the deluge of data that inundated health systems. Real-time dashboards and statistical models, often developed in Python, informed policy decisions and public health responses that saved lives.

In Vancouver, a city renowned for its tech scene, Python was used to amalgamate data from disparate health systems, helping to manage the caseloads in hospitals during the pandemic. Local data scientists used Python to build predictive models that informed resource allocation, such as ventilators and hospital beds, which were critical during the peaks of the healthcare crisis.

Today, Python's influence continues to grow as health data science dives into new frontiers like genomics, precision medicine, and neural network-driven diagnostics. Its evolution is characterized by a symbiotic relationship with the healthcare sector: Python advances, and health data science finds new horizons to explore.

Emergence of Python in Data Science

The emergence of Python as a powerhouse in data science is a tale of serendipity and strategic foresight. It began quietly, as academic institutions and a few forward-thinking enterprises started to experiment with Python's potential for data analysis tasks. Initially overshadowed by stalwarts like R

and MATLAB, Python's journey in the data science world was not meteoric but marked by steady, persistent growth.

Python's user-friendly syntax appealed to non-programmers, including statisticians and analysts, who found its readability conducive to rapid learning and application. This was particularly advantageous as the data science discipline itself was evolving, requiring professionals who could bridge the gap between statistical theory and computational practice.

The tipping point for Python's rise in the data science community was the development and improvement of several key libraries tailored to data analysis and scientific computing. The SciPy ecosystem, which included NumPy for numerical operations and pandas for data wrangling, provided the foundational tools necessary for data scientists to transition from theory to practice with ease.

Moreover, the language's interoperability and its ability to glue disparate systems together made it a favorite for integrated data science workflows. As open-source software, Python encouraged collaboration and sharing, which rapidly accelerated the development of a rich ecosystem of data science libraries and frameworks.

In the context of healthcare, Python's ascendancy was bolstered by the specific demands of medical data analysis. The healthcare industry required a tool that could handle the complexities of medical data, from varied data types like imaging and genomic sequences to time-series data from patient monitoring devices. Python's simplicity and the rich suite of libraries, such as BioPython for biological computations and PyHealth for healthcare analytics, made it an ideal fit for the domain.

The capacity of Python to deal with large datasets, a staple in the healthcare industry, further cemented its position. Libraries like Dask and Vaex extended Python's ability to work with "big data", enabling the analysis of datasets too large to fit into a single machine's memory, without the need for complex distributed computing setups.

Python's contribution to data science became conspicuously evident during global health crises, where rapid data analysis was crucial. Its role in streamlining data flows, from collection and cleaning to modeling and visualization, allowed health professionals and decision-makers to respond to critical situations with unprecedented agility.

In the classroom and the lab, Python became the teaching language of choice, shaping new generations of data scientists. Its pragmatism and versatility prepared students for the real-world challenges they would face, particularly in the multifaceted landscape of health data science.

As Python's prominence in data science grew, so did the platforms supporting it. Jupyter Notebooks emerged as a popular interactive environment, allowing data scientists to combine executable code with narrative text and visualizations. This proved invaluable in sharing research findings, educating peers, and streamlining collaborative projects in both academic and healthcare settings.

Understanding Basic Data Types: Strings, Integers, Floats

In Python programming for healthcare data science, an astute understanding of basic data types is imperative. These foundational types are the atoms of the data universe, forming the substance from which complex data structures and nuanced analysis are crafted.

Strings, encapsulated within either single (' ') or double (" ") quotes, are sequences of characters representing textual data. In healthcare data science, strings are omnipresent, encompassing anything from patient names to diagnostic codes. They enable the representation of non-numeric data within a dataset, a crucial feature considering the extensive use of text in medical records, prescriptions, and notes.

Consider a patient's record that contains a string "Diabetes Mellitus Type 2" as a diagnosed condition. This text, stored as a string, becomes a key piece of data for analysis, classification, and potential alignment with treatment protocols. Python provides a multitude of methods to manipulate and process strings, such as ``split()``, ``replace()``, and ``upper()``, which can be

leveraged to standardize and prepare textual data for further data science tasks.

Integers are whole numbers without a decimal point. In healthcare datasets, integers are used to represent discrete data such as the number of hospital admissions, patient room numbers, or the count of a particular type of white blood cell. An understanding of integers is essential, as they are frequently used in statistical models and calculations across health data analysis.

For instance, when dealing with patient age demographics, integers provide a clear and concise representation that can be easily compared and calculated upon. Python's innate ability to handle arithmetic operations with integers allows for efficient computation when assessing metrics like the average age of patients with a certain condition or the distribution of ages within a study population.

Floats, the third basic data type, are numbers that include a decimal point. They are vital for representing continuous measurements in medical data, such as body mass index (BMI), blood pressure readings, or medication dosages. These values require the precision that floats offer, especially when the difference of small decimals can significantly impact a patient's health outcome.

Take, for example, the administration of a drug where dosage needs to be calculated based on patient weight; floats allow for the precision needed in this calculation. With Python's float division, even when both operands are integers, a float result is returned, ensuring precise outcomes in every calculation.

Both integers and floats fall under the wider category of numbers within Python, and they can be freely converted between each other to suit the needs of different datasets. This flexibility is fundamental for health data scientists, who must frequently normalize data and convert between measurements units.

Complex Data Structures: Lists, Tuples, Dictionaries, and Sets

In the analytical orchestra that is Python programming for health data science, complex data structures are the ensembles that harmonize disparate elements into a coherent symphony of information. As we dive into these structures, we unveil their unique characteristics and their indispensable role in organizing, storing, and manipulating data efficiently.

Lists in Python are mutable sequences, capable of storing an ordered collection of items, which can be of different data types. In healthcare data science, lists are akin to versatile containers, ideal for housing sequential data such as patient vitals over time or a series of laboratory test results.

Imagine a scenario involving the tracking of a patient's cholesterol levels. A list allows for the appending of new data points as they are received, the convenient retrieval of any specific measurement, and the easy sorting of results for trend analysis. Lists also support comprehensive slicing, enabling health data scientists to segment sequences for focused investigations.

For exemplification:

```
```python
cholesterol_levels = [200, 189, 204, 199, 178]
cholesterol_levels.sort() # Sorting to find trends
print(cholesterol_levels)
```
```

Tuples are immutable sequences, which means once they are created, their content cannot be altered. This quality makes tuples reliable vessels for fixed data groupings such as the coordinates of a hospital's location or the date of a patient's discharge.

Tuples bring forth a level of data integrity, as their immutability prevents accidental alteration—a crucial feature when dealing with sensitive health information that must remain unmodified for legal and ethical reasons.

An example of a tuple might be:

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```
```python
hospital_location = (49.2827, -123.1207) # Latitude and longitude of
Vancouver General Hospital
discharge_date = (2023, 3, 14) # Year, Month, Day
```
```

Dictionaries are Python's built-in mapping type. They are unordered collections of items where each item is a key-value pair. Dictionaries are ideal for associating related information, like linking patient IDs to their records or mapping medications to their dosages.

In health informatics, dictionaries facilitate the quick retrieval of information based on unique identifiers—critical in environments where rapid access to patient-specific data can be life-saving.

A simple dictionary example:

```
```python
patient_medication_dosage = {'Metformin': 500, 'Atorvastatin': 20}
print(patient_medication_dosage['Metformin']) # Outputs: 500
```
```

Sets are unordered collections of unique elements. In the context of health data, sets are useful for eliminating duplicates, which is beneficial when compiling unique lists of symptoms, medications, or diseases from a larger dataset.

Sets inherently support mathematical set operations like union, intersection, and difference, enabling health data scientists to perform analysis on distinct groups of data effectively.

Utilizing a set to identify unique conditions:

```
```python
```



```
patient_conditions = set(['Hypertension', 'Diabetes', 'Hypertension'])
print(patient_conditions) # Outputs: {'Hypertension', 'Diabetes'}
'''
```

Each of these complex data structures—lists, tuples, dictionaries, and sets—serves a distinct purpose and offers a toolset for solving specific problems within the vast domain of health data science. Whether you are constructing patient profiles, managing clinical trial data, or tracking epidemiological trends, understanding and leveraging these structures is fundamental to effective data management and insightful analysis.

## **Handling Healthcare-Specific Data Structures: FHIR, HL7**

In health informatics, data interoperability is not just a technical requirement; it's a conduit for continuity of care, patient safety, and clinical research. Healthcare-specific data structures such as Fast Healthcare Interoperability Resources (FHIR) and Health Level Seven (HL7) are the lingua franca enabling diverse health information systems to converse seamlessly.

FHIR is a standard describing data formats and elements (known as "resources") and an application programming interface (API) for exchanging electronic health records. FHIR is built on modern web technologies and is designed for ease of implementation and integration. It thrives on simplicity and extensibility, making healthcare data exchange more intuitive and efficient.

The following Python snippet demonstrates how one might interact with a FHIR API to retrieve a patient's record:

```
```python
import requests

fhir_endpoint = "https://fhirtest.uhn.ca/baseDstu3/Patient/845439"
```

```

response = requests.get(fhir_endpoint)
patient_data = response.json()
print(patient_data['name']) # Accessing the patient's name from the FHIR
response
'''

```

HL7, specifically HL7 Version 2.x, is a set of international standards for the transfer of clinical and administrative data between software applications used by various healthcare providers. These standards focus on the application layer, which is "layer 7" in the OSI model. HL7 helps to simplify the implementation of interfaces among healthcare systems and reduce the complexity of healthcare data integration.

Parsing an HL7 message to extract patient information might look like this:

```

```python
import hl7

An example HL7 message
hl7_message =
"MSH|^~\&|HIS|RAD|LAB|CARDIO|202303141605||ADT^A01|MSG0000
1|P|2.6rEVN|A01|202303141605rPID||545776^^^HIS||SMITH^JOHN^A||
19600407|M||C|1200 N ELM STREET^^GREENSBORO^NC^27401-
1020|GL|(919)379-1212|(919)271-
3434||S||545776|123456789|987654^NC\r"

Parse the message
message = hl7.parse(hl7_message)
for segment in message:
 if segment[0] == 'PID':
 patient_info = segment
 print(f'Patient's Name: {patient_info[5]}") # Outputs: Patient's
Name: SMITH^JOHN^A

```

...

Both FHIR and HL7 play pivotal roles in the management of health data—they encapsulate patient information, clinical observations, diagnostic reports, and treatment outcomes, all of which are essential for a comprehensive understanding of a patient's health narrative.

However, the complexities of these data structures lie not only in their syntax but also in their semantic layers—where the meaning of the data is encoded in the relationships between the elements. It requires a multifaceted approach to handle these data structures proficiently: a thorough understanding of the standards, an ability to navigate or construct APIs, and a keen sense for data quality and integrity.

As health data scientists, the ability to parse, manipulate, and compose FHIR and HL7 messages with Python opens a multitude of possibilities for system integration, data analysis, and, for transforming the quality and delivery of healthcare. The upcoming sections of this book will dive deeper into practical applications and the nuances of these healthcare-specific data structures, offering readers an actionable understanding of how to harness their full potential in the pursuit of health data excellence.

## **Data Type Conversion and Manipulation Techniques**

The versatility of Python in handling various data types is crucial when dealing with the heterogeneity of healthcare data. A deep dive into data type conversion and manipulation techniques reveals the transformative power these processes have on data analysis, especially when data comes from disparate sources and formats.

Data Type Conversion in Python is a fundamental skill for health data scientists. In healthcare datasets, numerical and categorical data often coexist, and the ability to convert between data types is necessary for effective data preparation and analysis. Python's dynamic typing allows for effortless data type conversion, enhancing the fluidity with which one can clean and preprocess healthcare data.

Let us explore how Python facilitates these transformations:

```
```python
# Convert string to float
blood_pressure = "120.5"
blood_pressure_value = float(blood_pressure)

# Convert integer to string
patient_id = 12345
patient_id_str = str(patient_id)

# Convert a list of strings to a list of integers
age_years = ["35", "42", "58"]
age_years_int = list(map(int, age_years))
```
```

Manipulating Data Types is just as critical. The manipulation of lists, dictionaries, and dataframes is commonplace in Python-driven healthcare analytics. For instance, when working with patient records stored in lists or dictionaries, one might need to add, remove, or update entries as new data becomes available or corrections are made.

Consider the following example, which simulates updating a patient's record:

```
```python
patient_record = {
    'name': 'John Smith',
    'age': 45,
    'blood_type': 'O+',
    'allergies': ['Penicillin', 'Peanuts']
}
```

```
# Updating the age
patient_record['age'] = 46

# Adding a new allergy
patient_record['allergies'].append('Aspirin')

# Removing an incorrect allergy
patient_record['allergies'].remove('Peanuts')
...
```

Dataframes, the cornerstone of the pandas library, are especially powerful for tabular data manipulation. They allow for operations on entire columns or rows, conditional selection, and complex joins and merges. The following snippet showcases a basic dataframe operation:

```
```python
import pandas as pd

Create a dataframe from a dictionary
df = pd.DataFrame({
 'patient_id': [1, 2, 3],
 'blood_pressure': [120, 135, 110],
 'cholesterol': [190, 220, 185]
})

Convert blood pressure to a categorical variable
df['bp_category'] = pd.cut(df['blood_pressure'], bins=[0, 120, 140, 190],
 labels=['Normal', 'Elevated', 'High'])
...
```
```

Through these examples, one can appreciate the elegant simplicity with which Python handles diverse data types and the robustness it offers in data

manipulation.

Memory Management for Large Health Datasets

In the domain of health data science, the proficient management of memory is paramount, particularly when confronted with the colossal datasets that characterize contemporary healthcare research and practice. The handling of large datasets with aplomb is a testament to the judicious use of Python's facilities, engineered to be both powerful and efficient.

Efficient Memory Usage entails the employment of strategies to minimize memory consumption without compromising the speed or accuracy of data analysis. Python provides numerous avenues for this, and one especially potent tool in the health data scientist's arsenal is the use of `pandas` library with its well-optimized data structures.

Consider the use of `dtype` optimization for reducing memory footprint:

```
```python
import pandas as pd

Load a large dataset of patient records
patient_data = pd.read_csv('large_health_dataset.csv')

Optimize memory usage by downcasting numerical columns
float_cols = patient_data.select_dtypes(include=['float']).columns
int_cols = patient_data.select_dtypes(include=['int']).columns

patient_data[float_cols] = patient_data[float_cols].apply(pd.to_numeric,
downcast='float')

patient_data[int_cols] = patient_data[int_cols].apply(pd.to_numeric,
downcast='integer')
```
```

In such a procedure, the application of `downcast` to 'float' and 'integer' can significantly reduce the memory footprint of the dataset by fitting the data into the most appropriate and compact numerical dtype available.

Data Chunking is another technique that shines when manipulating extensive datasets that cannot be readily accommodated in memory. By partitioning the dataset into manageable pieces, one can iteratively process and analyze the data.

A demonstration of chunking a dataset using `pandas`:

```
```python
chunk_size = 5000 # This can be adjusted based on the available memory
chunks = []

for chunk in pd.read_csv('large_health_dataset.csv',
chunksize=chunk_size):
 # Perform data manipulation on the chunk
 processed_chunk = process_data(chunk)
 chunks.append(processed_chunk)

Concatenate the processed chunks back into a single dataframe
full_dataset = pd.concat(chunks, ignore_index=True)
```
```

In-Memory Compression techniques, such as those offered by `bcolz` or `PyTables`, are also essential for dealing with voluminous health datasets. These libraries can store data in a compressed format, which both reduces memory usage and accelerates processing time due to lesser I/O operations.

Efficient Data Storage Formats such as HDF5 or Parquet, when paired with Python, allow for sophisticated on-disk storage while still providing the capabilities for fast reading and writing operations, which is pivotal in the context of large-scale health data.

```
```python
Write a DataFrame to a Parquet file
df.to_parquet('patient_data.parquet')

Read the Parquet file back into a pandas DataFrame
df = pd.read_parquet('patient_data.parquet')
```
```

Through judicious use of these memory management techniques, health data scientists can conduct analyses that might otherwise be hampered by the limitations of system memory. The upcoming segments will continue to elucidate advanced strategies for working with substantial health datasets, ensuring that the reader is well-equipped for the rigorous demands of health informatics.

The Art and Science of Loading Health Datasets with Python

As we pivot our focus to the initial stages of data analysis, it becomes evident that the foundational act of loading health datasets into Python is both an art and a science. It requires a meticulous balance of technical knowledge and a nuanced understanding of the data's intricacies.

Loading and Inspecting Health Datasets with Pandas

To initiate our practical exploration, let us consider the import of a dataset containing patient laboratory results. The CSV file format is ubiquitously used for its simplicity and widespread compatibility with various tools and platforms.

```
```python
import pandas as pd

Importing the dataset
lab_results = pd.read_csv('patient_lab_results.csv')
```



```
Display the initial few records to establish familiarity
print(lab_results.head())
'''
```

The `'head()'` method is instrumental in providing a sneak peek into the dataset, revealing the initial rows and allowing for a preliminary assessment of the data structure at a glance. With healthcare data often varying in quality, the initial inspection is a crucial step that informs the strategy for cleaning and preprocessing.

The next stage in our inspection is to perform a thorough quality check, utilizing Pandas' functionality to summarize the dataset, thus unveiling any apparent issues or peculiarities such as missing values, which are particularly troublesome in health data due to the potential impact on patient outcomes.

```
'''python
Dataset summary, including non-null values and data types
print(lab_results.info())

Identify columns with missing values
missing_values = lab_results.isnull().sum()
print(missing_values[missing_values > 0])
'''
```

Upon pinpointing the columns with missing values, we can strategize on approaches to handle these effectively, whether through imputation techniques or by consulting clinical experts on the best course of action.

Exploratory data analysis continues as we dive deeper into the dataset's numerical summaries, particularly for variables that are critical indicators of health outcomes, such as cholesterol levels or blood pressure readings.

```
'''python
```

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# Exploring the Variety of Random Documents with Different Content

Gaspare Truffi still wears the garb of a religious order—generally that of St. Peter of Pisa—that he may the more easily impose upon the peasantry; who stand in no little awe of his harsh voice, misshapen figure, and hideous visage. On the mountains I have seen him in a very different garb: with a poniard in his sash, and the brigand's long rifle slung across his back. He is said to be in league with the banditti in the wilderness; and, as the confessor of Francatripa, he has obtained considerable sway over them. On more than one occasion, in the encounters between the brigands and the French, he has given undisputable proofs of valour; though clouded by fearful cruelty. You have heard of the wilderness of La Sylva? There the mountains rise in vast ridges abruptly from the sea, shooting upward, peak above peak; their sides clothed with gloomy and impenetrable wood, or jagged with masses of volcanic rock, which overhang and threaten the little villages that nestle in the valleys below. Tremendous cascades and perpendicular torrents—broad sheets of water fringed with snow-white foam—leap from cliff to cliff, and thundering down echoing chasms, seek their way, through mountain gorges, to the ocean. Into one of the frightful valleys of that secluded district, a body of French troops, commanded by the Marchese di Monteleone, were artfully drawn by Francatripa, the brigand chief, Gaspare, his lieutenant and confessor, and all their horde; by whom the whole unhappy battalion, to the number of five hundred rank and file, were utterly exterminated. Thick as hail the rifle balls showered down from all sides; and ponderous masses of rock, dislodged by crowbars, were hurled from the cliffs along the line of march of that doomed regiment. Save the marchese and his aide, every man perished; and the place is yet strewn with their

bones for miles—a ghastly array of skeletons, scarce hidden amid the weeds and long rank grass, and bleaching in the sun as the wolves and vultures left them."

"Cruel! horrible!" said Bianca, clasping her hands.

"Benissimo!" continued my enthusiastic friend; "it was a just retribution for those whom they slaughtered hourly in their Golgotha at Monteleone. It was a striking example of Calabrian courage and Italian vengeance! It will be recorded in history like the terrible 'Sicilian Vespers.'"

"A pretty picture of society!" I observed: "and such wretches as that apostate priest are permitted to attend the entertainments of the Prince of St. Agatha?"

"You must not criticise us too severely," replied Luigi. "The truth is, we all perceive that Fra Truffi is not an apostle; but he is the lieutenant and confessor of Francatripa, who is esteemed the greatest patriot in the province, and with whom it is not the prince's interest to quarrel, in the present disorganized state of society. Besides, he has plenty of ducats to spend, and he plays freely and fearlessly; which is the principal, and indeed essential qualification to ensure respect and admittance to the first gambling-tables in the land. Per Baccho! here is the villa—we have arrived at last!" he exclaimed, as the carriage drew up before the dark façade of his ancestral mansion.

Before the Viscontessa retired, I presented her with her ducats and jewels which I had won back from the hunchback: but she would by no means accept of them, and seemed for a moment to be almost incensed at my offer. I apologized, and returned the ducats to my purse: they proved a very seasonable reinforcement to my

exchequer; which racing, gambling, and our four-in-hand club at Palermo, had considerably drained. But the jewels I absolutely refused to retain; and a polite contest ensued, which ended by Luigi proposing that Bianca should present them to her patron, St. Eufemio, whose famous shrine stood in the church of the Sylvestrians at Nicastro.

Although aware that by this arrangement these splendid trinkets would become the prey of the greedy priesthood, I could not offer a remonstrance against such a proposition, and only requested permission to present Bianca with the necklace. I beheld with secret joy the beautiful girl blushing and trembling with pleasure: she did not venture, however, to raise her full bright eyes to mine, as I clasped the string of lustrous gems around her "adorable neck."

"A holy night to you, Signor Claude," said her aunt, as they rose to retire; "we shall not perhaps see you when you leave the villa, with my son and his people, for the British camp. But O, caro signor," she added, pressing my hand affectionately, "we wish you and your companions all safety and success in fighting against the enemies of our king: on bended knees, before the blessed patron of Alfieri, will my whole household and myself implore it. And remember, whenever you have spare time in the intervals of your military duty, the inmates of the Villa d'Alfieri will ever be most happy to welcome you."

She retired, leaning on the arm of Bianca, who merely bowed as she withdrew. The expressive glance I cast after her retiring figure did not escape the quick-sighted Visconte, who gave me a peculiar—shall I say haughty?—smile, which brought the blood to my cheek: my heart misgave me that in time coming I might find him a

formidable rival. Young, handsome, rich, and titled, and enjoying all the privileges which relationship gave him, he was indeed to be dreaded by a poor sub of the line.

"Giacomo!" cried he to his follower, "draw back the curtains, and open the windows towards the sea. Cospetto! the air of these rooms is like the scirocco—the malaria of the marshes—or the breath of the very devil! Bring champagne, and lay dice and cards—no, by Heaven! I have had enough of them to-night. Bring us the roll of our volunteers, and then begone to your nest; for Signor Claude and I intend to finish the morning jovially. And, olà! Giacomo, see that all our fellows are up with the lark, mustered in the quadrangle, and at Lieutenant Dundas's disposal, by daybreak."

The lofty casements were thrown open, revealing the midnight ocean, in which the stars were reflected, together with streaks of lurid light thrown across the deep blue sky by the beacon fires of the armed parties along the coast. The murmuring sea dashed its waves into foam beneath the arched galleries and overhanging rocks, and the cool breeze, which swept over its rippled surface, being wafted into the saloon, was delightfully refreshing. The wax-lights were trimmed, silver jars and tall Venetian glasses placed on the table; and the bright wine sparkling through the carved crystal of the massive caraffa, and embossed salvers piled with glowing grapes and luscious peaches, made me feel very much inclined to bring in daylight gloriously. I wished that my friend Lascelles and some of our gay staff at Palermo, or the right good fellows of my regimental mess, had been present.

"Your health, signor," said the Visconte, when Giacomo had filled our glasses and retired. "May you become a Marescial di campo

ere you turn your horse's tail on Italy!"

"I thank you, my lord," said I, smiling; "but I shall be very happy if I gain but stars to my epaulettes: and yet, ere that, Massena must be conquered and Rome won!"

"Now, then," he resumed, laying before me a long muster-roll of Italian names, "here are five hundred brave Calabrians, most of them my own immediate dependants, whom I have authority to raise in arms; but who, without the exertion of that authority, are able and willing to serve Ferdinand of Naples: whom Madonna long preserve! although the said Ferdinand is a fool. But unless your general appoints me their leader, and permits me to nominate my own officers, these fellows may desert *en masse* to the mountains; for they are unused to the rule of foreigners."

"Our general is too well aware of the courtesy requisite on his landing on these shores, to dispute with the Italian nobles, or chiefs of the *Masse*, their right to command their own followers. If they will serve obediently, and fight well—obeying as good soldiers must obey, and enduring as they must endure—Sir John Stuart will require nothing more." My enthusiastic friend grasped my hand.

"In our first pitched battle with the enemy," he exclaimed; "place us in front of the line, and we will show il Cavalière Giovanni Stuardo, that the bold mountaineers of the Apennines are not less hardy or courageous than their ancestors were when Rome was in the zenith of its glory."

Puzzled for a moment to recognise the familiar name of the general through the pronunciation of the Visconte, I was deliberating how to reply, when I observed the great gnome-like visage of the hunchback appear at one of the open windows; his fierce twinkling



eyes sternly fixed on mine, with the steady glistening gaze of a snake. He levelled a pistol, but it flashed in the pan. My first impulse was to grasp my sabre, my second to spring through the casement, which opened down to the level of the tessellated floor.

"What see you, signor?" exclaimed my astonished host.

"That abominable hunchback, Peter of Pisa, Friar Truffle, or whatever you call him."

"Impossible!" said the Visconte. "Most improbable, indeed! at such an hour of the morning, and in a place where the cliffs descend sheer downwards to the sea!"

"Monsignore, on my honour I saw his ill-omened visage peering between the rose-bushes."

Luigi snatched a sword from the wall, and we made tremendous havoc among the full-blown roses, searching so far as we dared to venture along the beetling rocks; but no trace of the eaves-dropper could be discovered. Indeed, the dangerous nature of the place, when I surveyed it, led me to suppose that I *might* have been mistaken, and that the apparition was an illusion of a heated imagination; for my head was now beginning to swim with the effects of the champagne. Santugo, however, took the precaution of bolting the casements, and drawing the curtains; after which we stretched ourselves once more on the couches to listen for any sound that announced the approach of an intruder.

"Ha! what is that?" exclaimed Santugo abruptly, as a dropping or pattering sound was heard on the floor.

"The deuce! my wound bleeds!" said I, on finding that the slight sword thrust which I had received in the morning had broken out

afresh; probably in consequence of my exertions when searching for the hunchback.

"A wound!" rejoined Santugo, with astonishment; "I knew not that you had been hurt this morning in your skirmish with the voltigeurs."

"A mere scratch, Visconte," I replied, with a jaunty carelessness, half affected, as I unbuttoned my uniform coat, and found with surprise that the sleeve and white kerseymere vest were completely saturated with blood. Through my neglect, and the heat of the climate, the wound was becoming more painful than I could have expected so slight a thrust to be.

"Sancto Januario! you never said a word of all this!" cried Luigi, alarmed by seeing so much blood. "Olà, there!" he added, springing to the door. "Giacomo Salvatore! Andronicus! you Greek vagabond!"

In three minutes we had all the male portion, of the household about us, with faces of alarm, in motley garbs and variously armed.

Giacomo, who had gained some knowledge as a leech during his innumerable skirmishes with the French, bathed the wound and bound up my arm in a very scientific manner; after which I bade my host adieu, and requested to be shown to my apartment. In truth, it was time to be napping, when in three hours afterwards we should be on the march for Maida.

My sleeping-room was in a part of the villa which had formed a tower of the ancient castle; and, if there were any ghosts in merry Naples, it was just the place where one would have taken up its quarters. It was named the *wolf's chamber*; the legend thereof the reader will learn towards the close of my narrative. A large black stain on the dark oaken planks of the floor yet remained, in

testimony of some deed of blood perpetrated in the days of Campanella; when a fierce civil war was waged in Southern Italy.

That I had seen the face of the hunchback palpably and distinctly, I had little doubt, when recalling the whole affair to mind; and I had none whatever that the hideous little man had great reason to be my enemy. At that unhappy gaming-table, I had stripped him, perhaps, of every coin he possessed, as well as the rich jewels he had won: a double triumph, which, coupled with my sarcasm on his appearance, was quite enough to whet his vengeance against me. In truth, it was impossible to feel perfectly at ease while reflecting that he might still be lurking about the villa; aye, perhaps under my very bed.

More than once, when about to drop asleep, the sullen dash of the waves in the arcades below the sea-terrace aroused me to watchfulness; and I started, half imagining that the bronze figures on the ebony cabinet, or the bold forms in a large dark painting by Annibale Carracci, were instinct with life.

Presently I saw a shadow pass across the muslin curtains of my bed, and a figure gliding softly between me and the night-lamp, which burned on a carved bracket upheld by a beautiful statue of a virgin bearing sacred fire. The sight aroused me in an instant; recalled my senses, quickened every pulse, and strung every nerve for action. Remaining breathlessly still, until my right hand had got a firm grasp of my sabre (which luckily lay on the other side of the couch), I dashed aside the curtains and sprang out of bed, just in time to elude the furious stroke of a Bastia knife; which, had it taken effect on my person instead of the down pillows, would have

brought my Calabrian campaign to a premature and most unpleasant close.

It was Truffi, the hunchback! Exasperated by this second attempt upon my life, I rushed upon him. He made a bound towards the window, through which he had so stealthily entered by unfastening the Venetian blind; but at the moment he was scrambling out, my sword descended sheer on his enormous hump. Uttering a howl of rage and anguish, he fell to the ground, where he was immediately seized in the powerful grasp of Giacomo Belloni.

"Signor Teniente!" cried Giacomo, as they struggled together on the very edge of the cliff, "cleave his head while I hold him fast! The stunted Hercules—the cursed crookback! Maladetto! he has the strength of his father the devil! Quick, signor! smite him under the ribs, or he will throw me into the sea!" But before I could arrive to his assistance, the hunchback himself had fallen, or been tossed (Giacomo said the latter) from the balustrade terrace, which overhung the water. He sank in the very spot where Belloni informed me there was a whirlpool, which a hundred years before had sucked down the *San Giovanni*, a galley of the Maltese knights. Escape seemed impossible, and I expected to be troubled with him no more.

"You may sleep safely now, signor," said the panting victor; "he will never annoy you again in this world. The Signora Bianca was afraid that the hunchback might make some attempt upon your chamber (where, to speak truth, blood has been spilt more than once), and so she ordered me to watch below the window with my rifle; but overcome with wine and the heat of the air I dropped asleep, and was only awakened by his ugly carcass coming squash upon mine!"

"I am deeply grateful to the Signora Bianca for her anxiety and attention. But, Master Giacomo, you must learn to watch with your eyes open, after we take the field to-morrow: nodding on sentry will not do among us."

Giacomo was abashed, and withdrew. Thus closed the adventures of my first day in Lower Calabria.

## **CHAPTER VI.**

### **THE CALABRIAN FREE CORPS.**

Awakened at daybreak by the report of the morning gun from the admiral's ship in the bay, I leaped out of bed, and threw open the casement to enjoy the pure, cool breeze from the sea; for my blood felt hot and feverish: the effects of the wine I had taken during the past evening, and the exciting occurrences of the last few hours. My wounded arm, too, was stiff and painful; but I hoped it would soon cease to give me any inconvenience.

Another bright and cloudless Italian morning: the distant sea and the whole sky, so far as the eye could reach, were all of that pure azure tint which the most pellucid atmosphere alone can produce. The sun had not yet risen, but the east was bright with the dawn, which burnished the rippling surface of the ocean, whose wavelets gleamed alternately with green and gold, as they broke on the shining shore. The morning landscape presented the most vivid contrasts of dazzling light and deep shadow. The peaks of the hills above Maida,—those hills which were so soon to echo the boom of

our artillery—the wavy woods which clothed their sides, and the silver current of the reedy Amato, glittered with glowing light; while the bosky vale through which the river wound, and the town of St. Eufemio, were steeped in comparative gloom. The bayonets of the marines on board Sir Sydney's squadron, were gleaming on poop and forecastle; and the red top-light, which burned like a lurid spark amid the well-squared yards and taut black rigging of the flag-ship, cast a long and tremulous ray across the still bosom of the brightening sea. It vanished when the morning-gun flashed forth from the dark port-hole; and, the shrill notes of the boatswains' whistles piping up the hands, when the whole fleet began to heave short on their anchors.

Dressing with expedition, in ten minutes I stood booted and belted in front of the villa, where Santugo and two other cavaliers mustered their recruits. Their appearance, though rather wild, was both romantic and picturesque: they numbered five hundred men; young, athletic, and handsome in person, swarthy in visage, and soldier-like in bearing—the setting-up a little excepted: altogether, they were a very valuable acquisition to our army. Their weapons were of a very miscellaneous and unwarlike character: consisting of clubs, poniards, and the formidable Italian oxgoads which glittered in the sun like lances, with some very indifferent rifles. But I promised the Visconte a sufficient supply of arms, accoutrements, and clothing, when his people were formally arrayed under our standard.

I was welcomed by a shout; and the cavaliers Benedetto del Castagno and Marco di Castelermo received me with the utmost politeness and warmth of manner. Both these gentlemen were of noble families, and enjoyed a high reputation for courage. The first

was a merry Neapolitan, who laughed at everything he said; the second the scarred and sun-burnt knight of Malta, on whose handsome features were marked a stern gravity and settled melancholy, no less striking than his garb. He was now enveloped in the dark mantle of his order, having on the left shoulder an eight-pointed cross, sewn in white velvet upon black cloth; the same sacred badge appeared upon the housings of his horse, and various parts of his attire: in silver on his epaulettes, in red enamel on his black velvet forage cap, and in scarlet cloth on the tops of his white leather gauntlets.

To my surprise, I understood that, before marching, solemn mass must be performed; and the Visconte led me to the private oratory, at the altar of which stood Fra Adriano, the chaplain and confessor of the family. The chapel was as gorgeously decorated as many coloured marbles, painted windows, a roof of gilding and fresco, springing from columns covered with the richest mosaic, and shining tessellated floor, could make it. Near the altar stood the celebrated statue of the patron of the Alfieri—Sant' Ugo. It was of oak, carved, gilt, and evidently of great antiquity; but so hideous that it might have passed for Thor, or any monster-god whom our rude forefathers worshipped in the dark ages of druidical superstition. At St. Eufemio, this image was regarded with the utmost veneration; from a belief in the wondrous miracles it wrought, and a tradition that it had been transported through the air by angels, from the saint's little hermitage in the beautiful plain near Palermo. Other relics in the chapel were viewed with no less reverence. I was shewn a leg of the cock which crew to Peter, a rag of the virgin's petticoat, a packet of the egg-shells on which San

Lorenzo was broiled, and a tooth of the blessed Ugo! which, from its size and the number of rings, bore so strong a resemblance to the tooth of a horse, that the venerable aspect and earnestness of Adriano scarcely restrained me from laughing outright.

"Fra Adriano is the oldest of our Calabrian priests," observed Luigi, in a whisper: "he has been the confessor of our family for three generations."

"Kneel with us, signor, if it be but to please the good father, who is now verging on his hundredth year;" added the Maltese commander in the same low voice. "Saint John preserve him yet for many years to come: long after the grave has closed over me! He beheld my order when it was in the zenith of its power and glory. Yes, signor, he beheld the galleys of Malta sailing through the straits of Messina, when the grand master Antonio de Vilhena, of most pious and valiant memory, unfurled against the infidels of Algeria the blessed banner of redemption. But these days have passed. The silver keys of Jerusalem, of Acre, and of Rhodes—three cities of strength, over which the knights of our order once held sway—are now paltry trophies in the hands of the British. Struck down by the hand of Napoleon, the banner of God and St. John has sunk for ever, and the red flag of Mahomet may now sweep every shore of the Mediterranean with impunity!" (Lord Exmouth's attack on Algiers did not take place till six years after this time.)

A hundred years spent in the gloomy and monotonous cloister! This priest had dwelt there from his childhood, and I sighed when contemplating the silver hairs, magnificent white beard, and calm features of this fine old man, and reflecting on the long life he had



wasted away—a life which might otherwise have been valuable. To what a living tomb had zeal and superstitious piety consigned him!

But to proceed. When the incense had been burned, the wine drunk, the bell rung, the prayers said, and responses given, we softly withdrew; the sweet, low singing of the choristers, mingled with the pealing notes of the organ, filling the little oratory with a burst of melodious harmonies.

After glasses of coffee had been served hastily round, we leaped on our horses; our appearance being the signal for the column of volunteers to get under arms. With no little trouble, we formed them into something like military order, and they moved off in sections of three files abreast. The Maltese knight enjoyed with me a hearty laugh at their shuffling march; but I had no doubt that, after being a few weeks under the tuition of our drill Serjeants, they would all make smart soldiers. Though we marched without the sound of drum or bugle, music was not wanting; two or three improvisatori who were in the ranks struck up a martial song, adapted to the occasion, and the others soon acquired the chorus—even Santugo and his friends joined; and the bold swell of five hundred manly voices ringing in the blue welkin, and awakening the echoes of the wooded hills, produced an effect at once impressive and animating.

These brave hearts formed the nucleus of that *Calabrian corps* which, on many future occasions, fought with such indomitable spirit under the British standard; which shared in the glories of Maida, the capture of Crotona, the expedition to Naples in 1809, and the storming of the Castle of Ischia, when Colonna, with all his garrison, surrendered to the bravery of Macfarlane and his soldiers.

As I rode round an angle of the villa, I observed the Signora Bianca, muffled in black velvet and sables, watching our departure, from one of the windows. Raising my cocked hat, I bowed, with something more than respect in my manner, at the same time making Cartouche curvet, and riding with as much of the air of "the staff" as I could assume. The graceful girl stepped out into one of the little stone balconies which projected before all the upper windows of the mansion, and I immediately pulled up; she smiled, and waved her hand in adieu. Standing up in my stirrups—"Signora," said I, in a low voice, "never shall I forget your kind anxiety for my safety last night; and believe me, Bianca, since the first moment we met at Palermo—but the Visconte is calling. The enemy are before us, and I may never see you again—adieu!"

"Addio! a reveder la!" she murmured; the blush which the first part of my farewell called forth giving way to paleness.

"May it soon happen, signora!" I added, as, spurring Cartouche, I galloped after the free corps, with my heart beating a little more tumultuously than it had done for a long time—at least since we left England.

"Olà, Dundas!" cried the Visconte, as I came up at a canter, "what has caused you to loiter?"

"My horse's near hind shoe was clattering, and I merely drew up for an instant to examine it," I replied: very unwilling he should suspect or learn the truth.

On our march, my new friends beguiled the tedium of the way by vivid descriptions of their encounters with the enemy, between whom and the Calabrese there had long been maintained a blood-thirsty war of reprisal. Every peasant who fell into the hands of the

French, having arms in his possession—even if it were but the ordinary stiletto or ox-goad—was instantly dragged before a standing court-martial, tried, and shot, or else hanged. Every means were adopted by Regnier to exterminate the roving bands of armed peasantry and fierce banditti, who incessantly harassed his troops during all their marches and movements: but in vain. Every tree, shrub, and rock, concealed a rifle, and a stern eye, whose aim was deadly. In secluded spots, where all seemed calm and peaceful but a moment before, or the stillness of the leafy solitude had been broken only by the tap of the drum, or the carol of the merry French soldier—whose native buoyancy of heart often breaks forth in a joyous chorus on the line of march—when least expected, overwhelming ambuscades of wild mountaineers would start up from height and hollow, galling the march of some unhappy party: suddenly the foliage would blaze with the fire of rifles, their sharp reports ringing through the wood, while whistling bullets bore each one a message of death, responded to by the shrieks and groans of dying men.

But my Italian friends could not yet boast of the frightful massacre of Orzamarzo.

By the wayside I observed a mound of fresh earth, above which rose a cross, composed of two rough pieces of wood. It was the grave of Kraünz, the leader of our Corsicans, who yesterday had been alive, and at their head: to-day, Frank himself could not have wished him lower—poor man!

As we passed through St. Eufemio, the inhabitants followed us *en masse*, filling the air with shouts, and cries of "Long live Ferdinand of Naples! Death to the Corsican tyrant, and Massena the

apostate! Death to their soldiery, the slayers of our people!" and the convent bells rang, as for a general jubilee. "Benissimo!" cried I, waving my hat, "Live Caroline! Viva la Reina!" and another tremendous shout, accompanied by the clapping of hands, rent the air.

The sun was now up, and the increasing heat of the morning made a halt for a few minutes not only desirable but requisite. We dismounted at the door of a café kept by a Sicilian (the Sicilians are famed for their ices), and procured a cool and delightful cup of limonea, and long glasses filled with what the seller called sherbet. Meanwhile, our volunteers were busily imbibing all the liquids they could procure from the stationary acquauiuóli, or water-sellers; who retail cool beverages to the passengers, at the corner of every street in a Neapolitan town. A gaudily painted barrel, swinging on an iron axis fixed between the door-posts, is the principal feature of these establishments, which generally open at a street corner; the rough columns supporting it are garnished with tin drinking cups, scoured bright as silver, and in these the seller supplies his customers with pure and sparkling water cooled by snow introduced through the bung-hole of the cask every time a draught is required.

"Caro signor, give a poor rogue a bajocch to get a draught of cold water!" is often the cry of the beggars in hot weather.

Thus refreshed, Santugo ordered his volunteers once more to march, and the road for our camp was resumed. After a short halt in the great forest, during noon, we reached the British forces, which still occupied their ground on the banks of the Mucato, where I had left them on the preceding evening. With much formality, I presented the Visconte and his companions to the general. The

camp was already crowded with other volunteers, who came pouring in from all quarters, imploring arms and ammunition, and clamouring to be led against the enemy.

"Napoli! Napoli! Ferdinando nostro e la santa fede! Revenge or death!" was the shout of the Calabrians: it rang from the gorge of Orzamarzo to the cliffs of Capo di Larma; and all of the population who could draw a dagger, or wield an ox-goad, rushed to arms, panting for vengeance. In less than two days, we had a corps of two thousand picked soldiers embodied, armed, equipped, eager for battle, and officered by the noblest families in the provinces. Clad in their white uniform,—until then there was a ludicrous want of similarity in their garb,—they appeared a fine-looking body of men, and every way the reverse of their countrymen of the Southern Provinces: brave, resolute, and yielding every requisite obedience to those Italian cavalieri whom the general appointed to lead them into the field.

The peasantry brought us in provisions in plenty, but refused to receive payment in return; saying that they "could not sufficiently reward those who came to free them from the hateful tyranny of the French," led by Massena, the renegade peasant of Nice.

On the night of the 3rd, I was despatched on the spur to the Podesta, or chief magistrate, of St. Eufemio, with a printed manifesto addressed by Sir John Stuart to the Italian people; inviting them to rise in arms, and throw off the yoke of France; promising them protection for their persons, property, laws, and religion; offering arms to the brave and loyal, and a free pardon to those whom Buonaparte had either seduced or terrified into temporary adherence to his brother Joseph.

Santuffo commanded the first battalion of the free corps; which was no sooner formed into something like fighting order, than we broke up our camp and moved to attack General Regnier; who, having been apprised of our debarkation, made a most rapid march from Reggio, collecting on the route all his detached corps, for the purpose of engaging us without delay.

On the evening of the 3rd, il Cavalière del Castagno, a captain in Santugo's battalion, brought us intelligence that Regnier, at the head of 4,000 infantry, 300 cavalry, and four pieces of artillery, had taken up a position near Maida, a town ten miles distant from our camp, and that another corps of three regiments under the Marchese di Monteleone was en route to form a junction with him. These advices determined our leader to march at once on Regnier's position, and attack him ere the Marchese came up. Accordingly, four companies of Sir Louis de Watteville's regiment, under the command of Major Fisher, were left to protect our stores and a small field work which, under the direction of Signor Pietro Navarro of the Sicilian engineers, had been thrown up on our landing, and planted with cannon. Our little army marched next day (the 4th) in three brigades; which, together with the advance under Colonel Kempt, and a reserve of artillery with four six-pounders and two howitzers, under Major Le Moine, made barely five thousand men, exclusive of the free corps.

## **CHAPTER VII.**

### **THE BATTLE OF MAIDA.**

The morning of the battle was one of the most beautiful and serene I ever beheld, even in Italy. As the curtain of night was drawn aside, and the bright beams of morning lighted up the giant masses of the Apennines, the green rice-fields, and luxuriant vineyards; white-walled towns and villages, solitary convents and feudal castles, waving woods, and the indentations of the rocky coast, all became tinted with their most pleasing hues. But the surpassing splendour of the sun—in whose joyous effulgence the whole glorious landscape seemed palpitating with delight—the clearness of the atmosphere, and the deep blue of the wondrous vault above us, were all forgotten, or unheeded: we thought only of the foe in position before us; while the dropping fire from our flankers, who had commenced skirmishing with the French tirailleurs, kept us keenly alive to the desperate work which had to be accomplished ere the sun sank below the sea. When that hour came, might I be alive to behold it? How many an eye that looked on its glorious rising, would then be closed for ever!

General Regnier's troops were encamped below Maida, on the face of a thickly-wooded hill, which sloped into the plain of St. Eufemio. The Amato, a river which, though fordable, has very muddy and marshy banks, ran along the front of his line, while his flanks were strengthened and defended by groves of laurel bushes, and a thick impervious underwood, which he had filled with scattered light troops. Cavalière Castagno by his influence among the peasantry, obtained hourly any intelligence we required; and just before the battle begun, he conveyed to me, for the general's information, the unpleasing tidings, that Monteleone's corps, to the number of three thousand men, were now moving into position on the French right.

General Regnier was now at the head of eight thousand bayonets, while we had little more than half that number, exclusive of the Calabrians, on whom, as yet, we could not rely much in the field; and they were, consequently, to form a corps of reserve: much to the annoyance of the gallant Santugo and his friends.

We marched in close column of subdivisions, parallel with the sea-shore, until we had nearly turned Regnier's left; and as our movements were all made in a spacious plain, with the morning sun glaring on our serried ranks and burnished arms, he had an excellent view of our numbers and intentions. Had Regnier quietly maintained his position on the hill, we would soon have turned it altogether, and thus placed him between us and the sea; where Sir Sydney's squadron lay, broadside to the shore, with ports open and guns double shotted. To us the movement was full of peril: our retreat might be cut off; while, in consequence of the smallness of our force, the difficulties of access, and the natural strength of the ridge on which the enemy was posted, we should have found it no easy task to drive him back.

Whether the Frenchman feared he should be out-flanked, or was encouraged by his numbers to attack us, I know not; but he soon crossed the Amato, in order of battle, and moved his entire force into the plain, where his corps of cavalry—an arm, of which we were, most unfortunately, deficient—would act more effectively.

As yet, not a shot had been fired: the enemy continued advancing towards us steadily and in line; their arms flashing, colours fluttering in the breeze, and drums beating in sharp and measured time. They halted by sound of trumpet, and, at the head



of a glittering staff, Regnier swept, at a gallop, from the right flank to the left.

"Gentlemen," said Sir John to his staff, on first observing this new movement of the enemy; "ride at full speed to the battalions, and order them to deploy into line. Mr. Lascelles, desire Cole to take up his ground where he is now. Dundas, you will direct Major Le Moine to get his guns into position on that knoll, where the wooden cross stands—to have them unlimbered, and ready to open on the enemy's line the moment he deems it within range. Order Lieutenant Colonel Kempt to throw forward the whole of his light infantry, double quick, and in extended order to "feel" the enemy, and keep their tirailleurs in check."

Saluting with one hand, I wheeled Cartouche round with the other, gave him the spur, and galloped on my mission; delivering the order to deploy into line as I passed the heads of the different columns. In three minutes Le Moine had his field-pieces at the appointed post, and wheeled round; the iron pintles drawn, the limbers cast off, and the muzzles pointed to the enemy. Leaping from his horse, he levelled, and fired the first shot himself.

It was the signal gun, announcing that the work of destruction and death had begun in grim, earnest. My heart beat thick and fast; every pulse quickened, and a proud, almost fierce and wild sensation, swelled within me, as the sharp report rang through the clear still air, and the white smoke floated away from the green knoll, revealing the dark cannon that bristled around it.

I reined up my gallant grey on an eminence, to watch the effect of the ball. General Regnier, escorted by fifty dragoons, their brass helmets and bright swords flashing in the sun, was at that moment

galloping back to his right flank; and on this group the shot took effect: a commotion was visible among them immediately, and they rode on at a quicker pace, leaving a dark heap behind them—a rider and his horse lay dying or dead. The whole of our field-pieces now opened a rapid cannonade on the French line, and continued it incessantly during the action.

By this time the light infantry were hotly engaged: the Sicilian volunteers, the Corsicans, and our provisional light battalion, were filling the dark-green underwood, and the leafy groves along the banks of the Amato, with smoke; while hill, rock, and woodland rang with the ceaseless patter of the fire they rained on the French tirailleurs, who blazed at them in return with equal spirit, from behind every screen afforded by the irregularity of the ground. As the lines drew nearer, the light troops, as if by tacit agreement, were withdrawn by sound of bugle; and by nine o'clock in the morning the battle had become general, from centre to flanks.

The corps which formed the right of our advanced line, was a provisional battalion commanded by Colonel Kempt, and composed of the light companies of six of our regiments from Sicily, and that of de Watteville's corps, with a hundred and fifty picked men of the 35th under Major Robinson. These troops were opposed to the 1st regiment of French light infantry (the favourite corps of the Emperor), which they mauled in glorious style; pouring in a deadly fire at about a hundred yards distance. On their left was the corps of General Ackland, composed of the 78th, or Ross-shire Highlanders, the 81st regiment, and five companies of de Watteville's, with the 58th under the late General Sir John Oswald, then colonel.

General Cole, with the provisional battalion of grenadiers, and the 27th, formed our left. Such was the disposition of our little army when engaging the enemy, whose force mustered almost two to one. Sir Sydney Smith by this time had taken a position with his ships and gun-boats, to act and co-operate if circumstances favoured; but, much to the annoyance of the gallant sailor, his fleet could yield us no assistance during that day's fighting.

Led by the chivalric Macleod of Geanies,—a brave officer, who afterwards fell in Egypt,—the 78th rushed upon the enemy, with the wild and headlong impetuosity of their countrymen. I was close by their dashing colonel, when, sword in hand, he led them on.

"Forward the Ross-shire buffs! Let them feel the bayonet—charge!" And animated to a sort of martial phrenzy by the shrill pibroch—whose wild and sonorous war-blast rang as loudly on the plain of Maida as ever it did by the glassy Loch-duich, when the bale-fires of the M'Kenzie blazed on continent and isle—the bold Highlanders flung themselves with a yell upon the masses of the enemy. They were opposed to the French 42d regiment of grenadiers—a corps led by that brave French officer upon whom Buonaparte had bestowed the Calabrian title of Marchese di Monteleone. Riding in advance of his soldiers, by words and gestures the most enthusiastic, he urged them to advance, to keep together, to hold their ground. But his sabre was brandished, and the war-cry shouted, in vain; and vain, too, were the desperate efforts of his grenadiers before the tremendous charge of our Highlanders. Overwhelmed and broken, they were driven back in confusion, and pursued with slaughter by the 78th; until the latter were so far in advance of our whole line that Sir John sent me after them at full

gallop, with an order to halt and re-form, in case of their being cut off.

I delivered the order to Macleod, who was stooping from his horse in the arms of a sergeant of his regiment, and almost unable to speak. A rifle-ball had passed through his breast, within an inch of the heart, inflicting a most severe and dangerous wound: yet he quitted not the field, but remained on horseback, and at the head of his Highlanders, during the remainder of the action, and the fierce pursuit which followed it.

Drumlugas, a captain of the corps, in the *melée* unhorsed the Marchese, who narrowly escaped with the loss of his steed and sabre: these remained the trophies of the victor, who distinguished himself by more conquests and captures ere the day was done.

Colonel Kempt's corps was now within a few yards of the enemy, and the deadly fire which they had been pouring upon each other was suspended, "as if by mutual agreement," as Sir John stated in his despatch; "and in close, compact order, and with awful silence, they advanced towards each other, until the bayonets began to cross. At this momentous crisis, the enemy became appalled; they broke, and endeavoured to fly; but it was too late: they were overtaken with most dreadful slaughter." Ere they fled—

"Dundas, ride to Brigadier-General Ackland; let him push forward his brave corps, and complete that which Kempt has so nobly begun!" cried the general. I departed with this order, on the spur; but it was anticipated by Ackland, who was already leading on in triumph, through clouds of smoke, and over heaps of dead and dying, the 78th and 81st: shoulder to shoulder, they rushed on, with bayonets levelled to the charge—cool, compact, and resolute.

Discomfited by their formidable aspect, and the impetuosity of this movement, the whole of the French left wing gave way, and retired in confusion, leaving the plain strewn with killed and wounded. The river Amato was choked with the bodies and crimsoned with the blood of those who, unable by wounds or fatigue to cross the stream, became entangled among the thick sedges on its banks; where they perished miserably, either by the bayonets of the pursuers or by drowning.

At that moment a dashing French officer, at the head of three hundred heavy dragoons, made a desperate attempt to retrieve the honour of France and the fortune of the day: rushing forward at full speed through the white clouds of rolling smoke, he attempted to turn the left of the 81st, and capture three field-pieces posted between that regiment and the Ross-shire Buffs.

"Allons, mes enfans! Napoleon! Napoleon! allons!" cried he, waving his sabre aloft. "Vive l'Empereur! Guerre à mort!" was the answering shout of his fierce troopers, as they swept onward in solid squadron; their brandished swords and long line of brass helmets gleaming in the sun, while their tricoloured Guideon and waving crests of black horse-hair danced on the passing breeze. But the steady fire of the Highlanders made them recoil obliquely, and I found myself most unexpectedly among them, when spurring onward with the order to Ackland: to deliver which with speed, I had the temerity to ride through a little hollow raked by the fire of the three guns already mentioned, and along which these dragoons had advanced unseen amid the smoke.

The press was tremendous: riders cursed and shrieked as they were thrown and trod to death; horses were plunging and kicking;

and both fell fast on every side. Twenty swords at once gleamed around me, and their cuts whistled on every side, as I attempted desperately to break through the dense, heaving mass of men and horses. My heart leaped within me, my brain reeled, and my blood seemed on fire: I struck to the right, left, and rear, giving point and cut with the utmost rapidity; never attempting to ward off the flashing blades that played around my bare head—for my gay staff hat, with its red and white plume, had vanished in the *melée*. I must inevitably have been unhorsed and cut down, but for a sudden volley that was poured in point blank upon the cavalry from the dark brushwood covering one side of the gorge. A score of saddles were emptied, and many a strong horse and gallant rider rolled on the turf in the agonies of death; while all the survivors, save their officers alone, retreated at full gallop to the French position.

Next moment the whole line of the dashing 20th, led on by Lieutenant-colonel Ross, started out from their ambush in the thick underwood; where the regiment lay concealed during the smoke and confusion of the battle, unseen even by ourselves. Having only landed that morning from Messina, they had come up with our army during the heat of the contest; and Ross, observing the movement of the enemy's cavalry, threw his battalion into the thicket, the sudden flank-fire from which completely foiled their attempt upon our cannon. One man only of the 20th fell: but he was deeply regretted by the whole regiment—Captain Maclean (the son of Gilian Maclean of Scallecastle, in the Isle of Mull), an officer who had served with distinction in Holland, in the first expedition to Egypt, and elsewhere.

The Frenchman who had led on the dragoons seemed to be one of those daring and reckless fellows who scorn flight, and laugh at danger; so, venting a malediction on his runaway troops, he rode alone towards me. The 20th and other corps near us, seeing that we were well matched, with a chivalric resolution to see fair play, suspended their fire to let us prove our mettle, while they looked on.

Being an expert swordsman, and master of my horse, so far that I could clear a five-barred gate or cross a hunting country with any man, I had but slight fear as to the issue of the encounter; yet it flashed upon my mind, that to be signally defeated in front of our whole army would be worse than death. My antagonist was about thirty years of age, with a form modelled like that of a young Hercules; and his aspect and bearing led me to conclude that the encounter would be a tough one. He belonged to the staff, and on his breast glittered the star of the Iron Crown of Lombardy: a badge bestowed upon five hundred knights (the flower of his officers) created by Napoleon on his recent coronation at Milan, as king of Italy.

We advanced within twelve yards of each other, and then rode our horses warily round in a circle; each watching the eyes and movements of the other, with stern caution and alert vigilance, such as the time and circumstances could alone draw forth: the life of one depended on the death of the other. At last I rushed furiously to the assault, making a cut seemingly at the head of my antagonist, but changing it adroitly to his bridle hand; the stroke missed the man, but cut through both curb and snaffle rein. I deemed him now completely at my mercy; but as he had a chain-rein attached to his bridle, nothing was gained by the first stroke.

"Monsieur, I disdain to return the compliment!" said he carelessly, while, with a laugh of triumphant scorn, he shook his strong chain-bridle. Provoked by his insolent non-chalance, I dealt a backward blow with such force and dexterity that he began to press me in turn; and with skill that I had some trouble in meeting. His charger was so well trained, that he was aided in every stroke and thrust by its movements; while Cartouche, startled by the clash of the sabres, began to snort and rear. The restless spirit of the fiery English blood-horse was roused, and a shell thrown by a French field howitzer exploding close by, completed his terror and my discomfiture: Cartouche plunged so fearfully that my sabre fell from my grasp, and I nearly lost my seat while endeavouring, by curb and caress, to reduce him to subjection. I was thus quite at the mercy of the Frenchman; who, generously disdaining to take the advantage that my restive horse gave him, merely said, "Gardez, monsieur!" and bowing, lowered the point of his sabre in salute and galloped away, greeted by a hearty cheer from the 20th and Ackland's brigade.



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